

New book offers comprehensive critique of theistic evolution

Lita Cosner

Theistic Evolution: A scientific, philosophical, and theological critique

J.P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger, and Wayne Grudem (Editors)

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This massive, comprehensive book is a hard-hitting refutation of the ideas that evolution has been scientifically proved and that it is compatible with orthodox Christian theology.

An important collaboration

This volume brings together old-earth creationists like Wayne Grudem, Intelligent Design advocates like Stephen Meyer and J.P. Moreland, and young-earth creationists like Matti Leisola and John Currid (one exception to this is James M. Tour, who is often identified with ID, though he prefers not to be—he is, however, a believing Christian who is skeptical of ‘macroevolution’). This is important because it shows that Christians from a wide range of scientific views hold common objections against the idea that we have evolved.

Certainly, biblical creationists understand that the timescale is just as important as the falsity of evolution, and there are moments when the inconsistency of those who hold to an ID or OEC viewpoint comes through. However, having such a unified assault

against a viewpoint that is mutually concerning to all is a definite benefit to the Christian community.

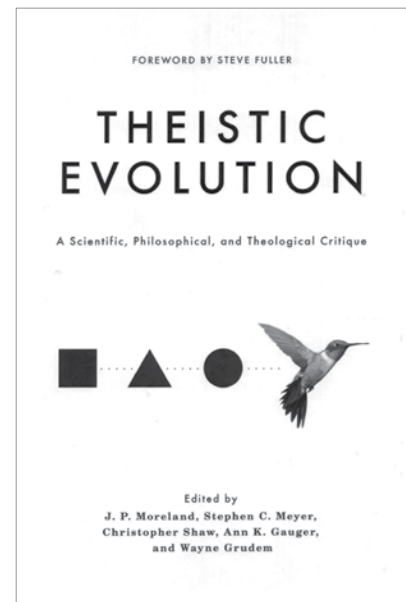
Evolution is not scientifically sound

The volume gives one of the most up-to-date and exhaustive critiques of evolutionary theory available from a scientific point of view.

Douglas Axe points out that accidental processes cannot explain the origin of enzymes: “Life as we see it depends on highly proficient enzymes, all built within cells by linking many amino acids (typically *hundreds*) together in precise sequence” (pp. 84–85). While evolutionist critics have guessed that enzymes could be built up gradually from shorter chains of amino acids, Axe points out that “Scientists who know about enzymes and the various attempts to use selection to enhance them ... *know they can’t back it up!*” (p. 85).

Stephen C. Meyer points out that rather than the fossil record showing a slow and gradual development of life, we see abrupt appearances of new animal types in the fossil record, not just in the Cambrian explosion, but all throughout the fossil record (p. 108). But the problem goes even deeper—“*To build new forms of life from simpler preexisting forms also requires the generation of new information*” (p. 111).

Meyer points out that mutations cannot create this new information.



“It turns out that it is extremely difficult to assemble new genes or proteins by the random mutation and natural selection process because of the sheer number of possible sequences that must be searched by mutations in the available time” (p. 114).

The longer the protein or gene, the more difficult the problem becomes. In fact, “the difficulty of a mutational search for a new gene or novel protein fold is equivalent to the difficulty of searching for just one combination on a lock with ten digits on each of seventy-seven dials!” (p. 117).

James Tour shows that even before one gets to the problem of modifying a living organism, evolution cannot account for the first life. Even organic chemists using intelligence to plan experiments fail 90% of the time (p. 179). Tour details how chemists using expensive equipment in the best labs face challenges in carrying out their experiments. If intelligent agents trying to reach a specified goal usually cannot get a far simpler solution than life from non-life, it shows that random chemical reactions, which are more often than not detrimental to life,

cannot result in the first life even given billions of years.

Winston Ewert shows that even though computer simulations are often argued to support evolution, those very simulations include assumptions that support intelligent design. First, the programs themselves are designed teleologically, like Dawkins' 'weasel' program. This program starts with the correct length of 28 letters, all of which are taken from the English alphabet (p. 204). The large number of 'mutated' copies made maximizes the chances of finding a 'beneficial' mutation. While Dawkins ran the simulation making 100 copies per generation, finding the desired outcome in 43 generations in one run and 64 in another, Ewert ran the simulation with 10 copies per generation, taking 723,232 generations in one attempt and 461,300 in another (p. 205). Furthermore, the string didn't have to make any sense on its own, but simply be closer to the intended outcome. Ewert concludes that "at almost every part of this simulation, teleological fine-tuning was present to guide its target" (pp. 205–206). The same teleological fine-tuning is a critical problem in every computer simulation intended to support evolution.

Jonathan Wells demonstrates that DNA mutations cannot drive evolution, because:

"DNA sequences do not even fully specify RNAs, much less proteins. And the three-dimensional arrangement of proteins in a cell requires information that precedes their synthesis and is specified independently of DNA" (p. 237).

In experiments that search for mutations in the development of a creature,

"Either the embryo manages to overcome the effect of a mutation and develops normally; or the embryo is deformed, often in grotesque ways; or the embryo dies. So to judge from the available

evidence, mutating the DNA of a fruit fly leads to only three possible outcomes: a normal fruit fly, a defective fruit fly, or a dead fruit fly. Hardly the evidence for evolution" (p. 256).

Sheena Tyler shows that embryology challenges evolutionary theory, because embryo development shows signs of intelligent design, rather than evolution. Precise timing is crucial in the development of the embryo, and "It is increasingly untenable to reconcile this as emerging from Darwinian chance processes, or even by the spontaneous self-assembly of organisms according to the laws of physics and chemistry" (p. 325).

The various papers, taken together, provide a compelling argument against biological evolution.

Problems with universal common ancestry and human evolution

Günter Bechly and Stephen Meyer demonstrate that the fossil record does not support universal common ancestry. The fossil record contains huge gaps between different types of organisms, "especially at the higher taxonomic levels (of phyla, classes, and orders) representing the major morphological differences between different forms of life" (p. 339). The major types of creatures arrive suddenly in the fossil record, with very few possible intermediate forms.

Casey Luskin shows how biogeography and the fossil record often do not provide evidence for common ancestry, and shows problems with the different types of phylogenetic trees. Furthermore, vertebrate embryos develop very differently from species to species (contrary to the false picture given by Haeckel's embryos), which is a problem for common ancestry.

Paul Nelson notes that some evolutionists challenge the existence of LUCA (the Last Universal

Common Ancestor; p. 405). He notes that common descent demands that all complex systems in living creatures evolve gradually, step by step, without foresight (p. 418). He further notes that the discontinuities we find in any proposed tree of life mean that we must reject LUCA, and if LUCA doesn't exist, Darwin was wrong (p. 421). Nelson then takes on the law of biogenesis—he states that no evolutionary biologist knows when it began to hold, but for evolutionary theory this could not have always been the case. He argues that the methodological naturalism that excludes intelligence from consideration is flawed.

Three chapters make the case that the line of reasoning for various 'ape-men' is flawed, that humans are unique whether examined on a genetic or a physiological and anatomical level, and propose a genetic case for a special origin of human beings.

Philosophical problems with evolution

Christopher Shaw argues that science has acquired almost religious status and is now trying to answer "the fundamental questions about our origins and the purpose of our existence—questions that once were the subject matter of philosophers and religious scholars" (p. 523). A core tenet of the 'religion' of scientism is "the universe and life arose through cosmic accidents over vast periods of time, and that therefore our human existence has no defined purpose" (p. 524). And even if a scientist should invest in years of training and funds to achieve a coveted university position, this "largely precludes the high risk of proposing new ideas in applications, and most scientists adopt the incremental approach to research which does not attack or question established thinking" (p. 532). Additionally, many scientists

have expressed concerns about the corruption of the peer review system (p. 535). All this means that ‘science’ is far from unbiased.

Stephen Meyer and Paul Nelson argue that methodological naturalism is not a justifiable rule for science, and that Christians should not adopt it (pp. 561–562). Stephen Dilley argues that methodological naturalism is problematic for theistic evolution in particular (p. 593). J.P. Moreland argues that Christians should reject theistic evolution because it “robs Christians of confidence that the Bible is a source of knowledge” (p. 633).

Evolution is not theologically compatible with Christianity

Furthermore, the book details many theological problems with theistic evolution. First, theistic evolution makes God directly responsible for evil, which is something that Christian theologians have never affirmed (p. 683). Theistic evolutionists also cannot account for the origin of emotions and morality (p. 731).

Most crucially, Wayne Grudem shows how theistic evolution undermines several key Christian doctrines. Scripture teaches that Adam and Eve were the first human beings, with no human parents (God having created Adam from the dust and Eve from Adam’s rib). Genesis says that Adam and Eve were created as sinless human beings and became the first sinners. All human beings are descended from Adam and Eve. Furthermore, Scripture teaches that God created the various ‘kinds’ of animals in distinct acts and they were not all descended from a common ancestor, and God rested on the seventh day after creating the world ‘very good’, and thus free from sin (p. 785). Grudem shows how theistic evolution rejects all of these teachings. Furthermore, he shows “A nonhistorical reading of Genesis

1–3 does not arise from factors in the text itself but rather depends on a prior commitment to an evolutionary framework of interpretation” (p. 786).

John Currid explains that theistic evolution is incompatible with the teachings of the Old Testament. He examines five models which incorporate theistic evolution and finds critical weaknesses in all of them. He concludes:

“At base level, the issue is the same as it has been for more than a hundred and fifty years: does one hold to the complete truthfulness of the facts reported for us in Genesis 1 and 2, and especially in the immediate creation of Adam and Eve as the first humans, or not?” (p. 878).

Guy Prentiss Waters shows that theistic evolution is incompatible with the teaching of the New Testament, which regards Genesis 1–11 as historical, and views Adam and Eve as actual individuals who were the ancestors of all people, and particularly of Jesus. He says that “leading proponents of theistic evolution depart from the New Testament writer’s testimony to Adam and Eve, thereby calling into question the historical underpinnings of the gospel” (p. 879). He concludes, “the New Testament writings cannot be accommodated to theistic evolution apart from transforming their teachings in a fundamental fashion” (p. 926).

Gregg Allison explains how theistic evolution is incompatible with historical Christian doctrine. The doctrine that God is the Creator is expressed in the first sentence of the Nicene Creed (p. 928). The Church affirmed creation *ex nihilo* “over against the Platonic idea of the eternity of matter” (p. 929). “This doctrine of creation ... was set in opposition to several prevailing philosophical theories that challenged the belief” (p. 931). In their opposition to ancient atomism, church theologians

rejected the idea that chance processes could form the world (p. 932). He continues by showing that theistic evolutionists must significantly have broken from what was the unanimous interpretation of Scripture in this regard for almost the entirety of church history.

Diversity of viewpoint as both a strength and a weakness

The contributors to this volume have views from young-earth creation, to old-earth creation, to various forms of Intelligent Design. One of the strengths of this book is that all of these viewpoints can successfully argue against evolution from biblical, scientific, and philosophical grounds.

However, young-earth creationists understand that the *timescale* of creation is just as important an issue as whether Adam had human parents. Old earth creationists still have death in the world before Adam’s sin, and they have to deal with human fossils ‘dated’ long before any possible date for Adam. Intelligent Design must still grapple with things that seem like ‘bad design’, which biblical creationists can attribute to the effects of the Fall.

But on the whole this is a very powerful and encouraging resource for creationists, and it is an important response to theistic evolution. It can be expected to rapidly become a standard resource for the person wanting to refute the likes of BioLogos, even though in many ways it does not go far enough.

References

1. jmtour.com/personal-topics/evolution-creation/